

OSPRI

Press Release Ocean State Policy Research Institute
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OSPRI COMMENDS TREASURER CAPRIO FOR PROVIDING TRANSPARENCY TO THE RHODE ISLAND STATE HOUSE

Without increasing staff or even increasing his budget, Rhode Island General Treasurer Frank Caprio has done what so many have said was not possible, he has created the Treasury Online Checkbook so taxpayers can keep an eye on how the Treasury spends our money.

"There are a lot of elected officials in America who say they will be open and transparent with the people's business, but very few of them actually do it," said William Felkner, president of the Ocean State Policy Research Institute. "We commend Treasurer Caprio for his efforts and thank him for providing this invaluable service to the taxpayers of Rhode Island."

The Treasury Online Checkbook documents every dollar spent by the Treasury in an easy to use and access online database. The Web platform comes from collaboration between the Department of Administrative Services, RI.Gov and the Treasury but it was designed in such a way that any other department can now place their books online as well.

"Not only has Treasurer Caprio provided an eye into the workings of the Treasury," said Felkner, "but he has removed any excuses for other departments to do the same thing. The technology hurdles have been overcome and there is no expense for development. Every department in Rhode Island can use this system – and they should!"

The Treasurer's initiative is the latest in the RI transparency movement. The Ocean State Policy Research Institute began promoting transparency in Rhode Island in February 2008 when we first unveiled the Transparency Train website containing several projects. First to go online was RI Data, which contains every budget, payroll, public employee contract and monthly check register for every city, town and school district in the state. Mid year OSPRI stepped up the efforts by introducing RI Votes, an online database of legislation and voting records.

In his press conference, Treasurer Caprio thanked Mr. Felkner for his input in the process and acknowledged that the Ocean State Policy Research Institute "is one of the leaders for transparency in Rhode Island."

"Treasurer Caprio has done a tremendous service for Rhode Islanders," said Felkner, "Only when armed with information will the taxpayers be able to take back control of government. Today, we are one step closer to that goal."

About OSPRI:

Created in 2007, our work is focused on crafting sound public policy based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, and traditional American values. We offer timely research and analysis on important issues to be shared with elected officials, the media, business leaders, community organizations and individual citizens. In recent months, we have been responsible for such successful projects as the Transparency Train – A public financial and legislative information repository, as well as regular updates published and available on our website and companion blog.

About The Transparency Train:

The Transparency Train Web Portal (www.transparencytrain.org) provides access to a variety of websites designed to provide public information in a Google-style searchable format. These sites include:

RI Data which contains every budget, payroll, public employee contract and monthly check register for all cities, towns and school districts in Rhode Island.

RI Votes which is an online database of legislation and voting records.

RI Schools is an interactive website that allows viewers to create comparative graphs of school districts plotting various metrics such as cost per student, test scores and the number of employees (coming Spring 2009).

RI Donors will contain a "connect the dots" approach to viewing political and lobbying finances (coming Fall 2009).

Take Action, a "how-to" manual that shows citizens how to file Freedom Of Information Act requests for public information and what to do if they don't comply.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview, please call Matt Giardina at 401/228-6691 or e-mail info@oceanstatepolicy.org.

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